

Historian's Report, July 2025

Event: Participated in the Reading of the Declaration of Independence at the Ledyard Town Hall; selected work on publicity for this event and for the printing event at Robert LoMascolo's press, including the important placement in Tour Cayuga's Independence Day materials.

Work with CPP: Provided documentation on the Walter Wood Law Office and on Demolition by Neglect; discussed possible options for this case.

Queries: On how the NYS Municipal Historian System can help someone find out information in another county and town.

Planned Acquisition: Discussions with Paisley Woodward, granddaughter of Zipporah Ritchie, Wells x08, on a small, cohesive, and well-organized collection of her grandmother's Wells-related paper spanning almost 70 years. This is a very good collection to add to the Village Archives, with much about the lifelong impact of the Village as well as Wells on a student. This collection, including a finding aid, will come to the Village soon.

Upcoming Display: "From Main to the Kicking Tree: Daily Walks in Aurora Circa 1905," a display of Morgan Series postcards from the Village Archives alongside Wells student photographs from the NY Heritage website. Alumnae members of the ALHS, including those living at a distance, have been invited to use these resources and to contribute. Opening TBA.

Wells College Archives: I am working actively with a local archivist familiar with Wells' collections and with the leadership of the South Central Regional Library Council to find temporary holding space, if necessary, and there is a possible partner.

However, the estimate of "local history" materials (no mention of the Village of Aurora) provided by Wells College in the published Legacy agreement seems unrealistically low. In addition to the "linear feet" offered by Wells, which does not take into account many odd-shaped items, I calculated room areas from the Long Library plans and provided photographs taken in haste in May 2024 to assist in figuring space needs. I hope to work with HWS library staff on this issue, also.

Given Tom Blair's departure for a short vacation just before the Preliminary Conference at the Cayuga County Supreme Court on July 2, it was unclear how and when our interests would be made known. Fortunately, a contact at HWS shared that the July 2 event was a conference to get Wells' materials, which are very incomplete, organized. The first, and probably the next (Aug. 13) meeting were and will be about the restricted gifts in the endowment.

As soon as Mr. Blair returned, I reiterated my offer of assistance per Mayor Orman's and your instruction to work together. He has not yet replied.

In regard to the Supreme Court, I attended the virtual conference, as did, apparently, many others; AAG Tim Mulvey remarked on the number of attendees. A careful transcription - prepared, I believe, by Wells alumna Caolan McMahon - was promptly posted to Facebook. (Recording was forbidden) My notes and memory confirm its exactness: nearly verbatim. For those who could not attend, I include it here.

Posted by Wells alumna Caolan MacMahon to Facebook.

"For those interested, here's a summary of today's [July 2] hearing concerning Wells College and the "legacy" agreement with HWS:

Leslie Schildt: Court Attorney

The purpose of today's appearance is to monitor the status of this petition.

Virtual court appearance: by law there is no video or audio recording allowed. Stop now.

We also have several participants observing. Just to be clear, I have gotten some emails – there are legal procedures you need to go through to participate. The court is not allowed to give any legal advice. Speak to your own attorney. As far as emails or letters received by the Court, those are not legally allowed to be considered in this matter unless formally filed as part of the official court record by someone legally party to the action. I would encourage you to talk to your own counsel how to do that. All that said, we have Mr. Callahan, Mr. Patyi here representing petitioner We have Mr. Mulvey here representing the AG office.

I'll start with Callahan/Patyi – on for a status update on this matter. I'll probably give you another court date.

Patyi: We are in the process currently of squaring away one component of this petition that pertains to notices to the donors. What we have is a pool of endowed funds that we are asking to be transferred to HWS. And part of the requirement is that we provide – not a formal notice through service, but rather informal through mail or email or phone call – we sent out many, many letters to people at last known address. A few envelopes came back as returned. Trying to identify other ways to contact people. Process is still ongoing.

It's important to talk about timing. What we have is endowed funds many directed toward scholarships. And since the institution closed in spring 2024, we have not been able to award those scholarships. We would like to be able to transfer these funds to HWS as soon as possible so they would be able to utilize them for the intended purpose of benefiting students that meet the requirements expressed in gift instruments.

Callahan: nothing to add.

Mulvey: As the court is aware I filed a letter request for a stay. Not a formal motion, didn't believe that was necessary. First inquiry is where the stay application is and what else the court may require of the AG's office in order to stay the proceedings while process Mr. Patyi outlined continues.

Schildt: Counsel what's your position?

Patyi: no objection. We wanted to get this process going and for several reasons this was the most appropriate way. We discussed this with the AG including prospect of the stay, and like we said no objection to granting one to the point that we have satisfied the requirement for the notice.

Schildt: I will relay everyone's petition to Judge Leone. Someone prepare a proposed order granting the stay given there's no objection. File proposed order on NYSEF. Everyone being on the same page, he will probably grant the stay.

Mulvey: Since we have some observers I just want to be clear what it's about. This may be helpful to avoid correspondence with my office and Frank and the court. Once the notice of the application on 555 of N-PCL, unless AG registers an objection within 90 days, the application is deemed acceptable. I am asking that be stayed until provisions of statute played out. My experience w supreme court around the region is that Judges will be willing to issue a "so ordered" – just as long as we have everybody here, I think it's more advisable that the Petitioner is willing to stipulate, the same language on the stay.

Schildt: Letter is probably fine as long as someone added a section for all attorneys to sign indicating it is stipulated.

Mulvey: I'll circulate this PM to Bond office. The only thing I would add from AG's perspective. Obviously, we have significant public interest. My office has discussed with Wells representatives thru counsel that ... it doesn't represent all, or substantially all, because of the value of the campus. But just so the court is aware, the AG's office is hoping to see sooner than later a comprehensive plan for distribution of real property and all assets of the college. I want the court to be aware that that's the perspective of our office and the charities bureau. We prefer not to have a series of piecemeal applications. That's for the court's benefit where the AG is on distribution of college's assets.

Callahan: we do have a draft affidavit about notices to the donors a day or two after the letters were sent. We've completed/exhausted all efforts to find donors we did not have LKA or contact information for.

Schildt: That's in your discretion when you want to file it. That makes sense to file with other notices – proof of notice. I assume there's going to be other affidavits regarding notice efforts. Either now or with the rest of them. It doesn't matter.

Other than NCD, anything else anyone needs to address? No.

How long do you think we need for a next conference date?

Patyi: I think because of issues with notice to donor, some donors have expressed desire for funds to go to an alternative other than HWS, we will be removing them

from that list. 3 weeks would be sufficient from today to have all that resolved. Any time after that should be fine.

Schildt: Jury trial week of August 4th. Week of August 11th. Wednesday afternoon (8/13) at 1:30pm – 2:00pm. If anything else in the meantime, reach out and will get you on the calendar as soon as possible.”

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Schwab, PhD
Village Historian